

BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY: Beatrice Ranis

"We wanted to stimulate the growth and guide and promote our culture throughout the Mainland, because lots of people do not (realize that we are composed of various racial groups). And we're all part of the world, and in order for us to get along in this world, we should understand each other's culture. (This), to me, is important. So this is why I say that I was always pressuring people to make (certain) that (programs were) 'the McCoy,' that (what) they're doing (was) not just for show."

Beatrice Ranis was born in 1927 in Wahiawā, O'ahu. She was raised on Kaua'i and graduated from Kaua'i High School. She then moved to Honolulu and began working in the territorial Department of Health. She later served as state registrar of births, deaths, and marriages and as deputy marriage license clerk for Honolulu.

Ranis first became involved with the State Foundation on Culture and the Arts [SFCA] in the early 1970s, when she was hired as coordinator of Filipino activities. She was appointed to the SFCA board in 1973 and served as chair from 1978 to 1981.

In 1980, Ranis was a participant in the 21st General Conference of the United Nations Education, Scientific, and Cultural Organization [UNESCO] in Yugoslavia.

Tape No. 20-21-1-90 and 20-22-1-90

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Beatrice Ranis (BR)

August 29, 1990

Kāne'ohe, O'ahu

BY: Joe Rossi (JR)

JR: This is an interview with Beatrice Ranis conducted August 29, 1990, in her Kāne'ohe home. The interviewer is Joe Rossi.

Mrs. Ranis, to begin with, could you tell me a little bit about your family, where they're originally from and when your parents came to Hawai'i?

BR: My parents were born in the Philippines. My father came to the U.S. as a sailor. After he left the service, he (lived) in San Francisco (and) went to Lowell High School in San Francisco. I believe there's still a Lowell High School. My father also went to school at Stanford [University]. He was there for several years. When he came back to Hawai'i he met my mother, (married), then worked for the pineapple plantation in Wahiawā (O'ahu). From there we moved to Kaua'i because he then became some kind of a supervisor in the pineapple research (project) of the Kaua'i Pineapple [Company].

My mother came as a youngster with my grandfather. She was housed in what they then called Susannah Wesley Home for the girls, because she was a very young person, and went to Ka'iulani School. There she was raised *'ohana* style. Because of being raised like that, my mother was not like, I would say, regular Filipinos, because she knew everything about being Hawaiian, falling in love with people, got along very well with people.

As I said, my father---because he was in the pineapple research for the company, he was looked up (to) in the Filipino community on Kaua'i. And surprisingly enough, you know, my father was one of the, shall I say, first people who started worrying about Filipino concerns. During his time---(the organization) was then known as the Territorial Filipino Council [of Hawai'i], now known as the United Filipino Council of Hawai'i. And it was during their time (too) that Filipinos (were given permission) to fish in Pacific waters. Previous to that, no Filipino could fish in the oceans. (The Territorial Filipino Council of Hawai'i was the first Filipino organization that banded together) and got that permission from the U.S. Congress. (A committee was sent to Washington, D.C. to lobby for this.)

My father was also very much interested in the arts. He was a person who (thrived on the) arts. He used to do a lot of things (for the community) when it came to pageants. Filipinos love pageants and fiestas. One of the things he was really remembered for in Kaua'i was whenever there was a queen, they always came to him to make the capes, like you see in the old pictures in the British royalty, the capes and the long trains (were designed by him). My father would do all (the sewing) by himself, by hand. My mother (helped), but he did (all the planning).

(As for) my mother, she used to be the (instructor)—she taught a lot of Filipino dances, even though she was raised here. And then, too, because we had a grandfather (living with us), we were taught to respect our elders very much. And so we have had that (trait stressed) in our family all the way up (to the present). Now, Mother, as I said, because she was a person who (got) along so well with lots of people, during World War II she also became a USO [United Service Organizations] director. So this is why we know so many people that have gone away from [Hawai'i after] the war. Up to the time she passed on, and after my father left, too, we have had contacts with soldiers who were stationed on our little island (of Kaua'i in World War II).

So this is why I say, what I did for SFCA [State Foundation on Culture and the Arts] was something that was imbedded in me and my family, because we all (share) the same (type of personality). We're all very active in our own professions. (In) my family, I have (five brothers and one sister. My) brothers all served in the U.S. Army. (We) have two colonels, a sergeant major, a command sergeant major, and the one that became the district superintendent of schools in the Leeward area. He's one of the first Filipinos that was—in fact, he is the first Filipino that was ever appointed as a district superintendent. He was a principal in the schools on Kaua'i and O'ahu. And he was only a sergeant. (Chuckles) I have a younger brother—the command sergeant major—who is now also retired from the military. (He lives) in Salinas [California] and is (the) training (officer for) the police department in Salinas. My sister is a retired schoolteacher.

This is why, when I was asked to (contribute) a portion for the seventy-fifth anniversary of the coming of the Filipinos, I emphasized—when I wrote my piece of article—that I was happy to do it because of the experiences my parents gave us as youngsters. And I still firmly believe in what I have been taught. Sometimes I get into arguments with people who forget that they are Filipinos. I'm very proud to be a Filipino.

JR: What were your parents' names?

BR: My mother's name is Lucia Simon. That (was) her maiden name. My father was Domingo Espinas Los Banos, Sr.

JR: What part of the Philippines were they from?

BR: My father came from the Bicol area. And his family, even though (we) were the poor ones, were one of those you would say were very, very rich. My father ran

away from home to join the [U.S.] Navy. And while he was in the navy, he (served as) the first Filipino yeoman. And that is a known fact also.

My mother, as I said, came as a very little girl with my grandfather.

JR: And where were you born?

BR: I was born in September of 1927.

JR: Whereabouts?

BR: In Wahiawā, O'ahu. We (were) all raised on Kaua'i, and I went to Kaua'i High School. This was all during the war.

JR: You mentioned that your father and your mother were involved in a lot of Filipino cultural activities. Which activities did you take part in personally—did you enjoy the best?

BR: Well, like I said, because we lived in a camp [in Kalāheo]. . . . Now, I don't know if you know this, but in the camps or the areas you come from—because this is a plantation camp, and we have several on the island of Kaua'i—seems like every camp had somebody they looked up to. And Mother and Father were the ones that were looked up [to] in the community. (Whenever) something would happen (or was being planned), the first person they'd talk to (or seek advice from) would be Father or Mother. And because of that, (they) were looked up to as mother and father of the whole camp. Every Christmas, every holiday, our house was the center of attraction, because everybody came there to gather and do our (celebrations together). And, as I said, because my mother was very a (very warm) person who (could) get along so well with everybody, we had parties for the boys (in the camp). At Christmastime we'd make little gifts of combs, cigarettes, you know, and share it with them. So they were really called *Nana* and *Tata*, which is what is referred to as the elder person in the family. And that's the way I grew up. And this is why I continue to look to treating the older people with a lot of respect. But what was the question you asked again? I forget. . . . (Chuckles)

JR: No, I was asking which of the different activities you enjoyed, personally, the best.

BR: Oh, that, the one on one, getting to make the boys enjoy their lives. Because they came as single persons, they had no family to look up to. And we were the family that they thought they belonged to. And they still do. (I enjoyed planning the parties and activities for the special events.) Once in a while when I go back to Kaua'i now—there are a number of the boys who had left their families, and then when they were able to go home to the Philippines, they got married. They came back with their families, and now they have children who are college graduates and teachers and professionals. When I go back home to (visit) old places that (we grew up in), they'll say, "Oh"—they used to call me Betty, not Bea. They say, "You know, Betty, we're so happy because now our sons went to school like you folks did. I have a teacher, I have a nurse." And that's what they remember. The first thing

they'll tell me is, "Because of our love for your parents, we did just like they did." So that, to me—being able to help them one on one is the most important thing.

JR: When you were going to high school, did you have any ideas of what you wanted to do when you graduated?

BR: Well, I had wanted to go to school (and become a librarian), but it was during the war [i.e., World War II], and all of my brothers were in the service, all five of them. And there was no one to help Mother and Father (financially). And so I came one day to town—Honolulu rather—and by accident I went with my sister-in-law to a friend who was working in [the territorial] personnel [office]. And, you know, because everybody (had) gone (to war) and—at that time there were no Japanese who were, I think, allowed to work in the vital statistics area (of the Department of Health). When they (asked), "Would you like to work?"

I said, "Oh, of course." So that's where I went to work, right out of high school. I was only seventeen when I graduated. And that was my first employment, and I stayed there until I left twenty two years later. I worked, as I said, at the very ground (level), and I (worked myself) all the way up to becoming, I would say, (the) number-two marriage license agent (in Honolulu). Previous to that, I used to (assign statistical codes to) birth, death, and marriage (certificates). I (was employed in Health Statistics) until I married my husband, who made me stay home and take care (chuckles)—take care of him.

(Laughter)

JR: Having grown up in the country on Kaua'i, what was it like moving to Honolulu and living here?

BR: Oh, it was a lot different, because I had to leave my parents, you know. But I used to (go home) every weekend to visit my mother and father. And because in her later (years), when she would get sick, I would go home to visit her all the time. It was traditional. Every time I got paid I gave her my whole paycheck. You just keep enough to keep yourself going. But I missed growing up at home in Kaua'i. You miss family life. I stayed with another uncle, but then I became mother to his family because he had little children. But you get used to that kind of living.

JR: When you were living in Honolulu at that time were you able to go to some of the Filipino events and things like that, similar to what happened in Kaua'i?

BR: No, because of the fact that I used to go home every weekend to be with my family. And I wasn't really interested at that time, because I was living in Kapahulu. Now, you know where Kapahulu is, (it's) near Waikiki. And all the neighbors that surrounded (us) were (not) Filipinos, except my uncle's (family), who owned a beautiful home on Mākini Street. Who would think that I came from a plantation home and I would live in a house that was made of stucco? So what was interesting to me was going out to the beach, to the parks, and nothing that was associated with the arts at that time (interested me). When you're young, at

seventeen—I think it's like the kids now, you just like go around and cruise, shall we say. That's what I did. (Chuckles)

JR: How did you first hear about the SFCA?

BR: I didn't hear about SFCA until Prose Courtemanche one day approached me, just prior to her getting ready to leave to go to the Mainland. She sat with me, and she said, "Bea, would you like to take over my job?"

I said, "What was your job?"

And she said, "Well, it's---I've been working with Alfred Preis, and what they're trying to do is improve the role of the Filipinos in the program of the state foundation."

So I said, "Well, what did that entail?"

And she says, "Well, we're trying to get to the communities, to get them interested in trying to preserve our arts, our ways, you know, all our various types of activities that the Filipinos do."

It was in '65, I believe, when the state foundation was first approved by the legislature. What Mr. [Alfred] Preis was doing was he wanted someone who could go to the communities, gather them, hold meetings, and get them interested in trying to teach them how to go about forming units or groups so that we could help them (at the) SFCA, help the Filipinos get enough monies to help perpetuate (our culture). We would go out to the outside islands for one or two days, gather them all in a community center, and tell them what the goal was. And the goal was really furthering our own culture so that we can all learn to live together much better.

And then the problem was. . . . SFCA at that time had to send a coordinator out to each island. So what we did was try to teach someone in that group who was the (community) leader to become the state's Philippine heritage coordinator. So the program then was called the State Council on Philippine Heritage. Then we had State Council on Hawaiian Heritage, State Council on Portuguese Heritage. I was fortunate, I helped start, also, the state—the heritage area for the Samoans. Then that was the last (group). We never formed any for the Chinese or the Japanese, but we had leaders that we could call (on). I cannot recall the names of the last two that I mentioned [i.e., the leaders of the Chinese and Japanese groups], although whenever I wanted any activities I'd buzz them, and they would come with their group. It was usually a dance group, or in the Chinese it would be the Chinese society group.

JR: Earlier you mentioned, when you were growing up, all the different Filipino activities that took place on the plantation. Back when Prose approached you about getting involved in the SFCA, did you have a sense that the Filipino customs were endangered, that they were becoming extinct here in Hawai'i?

- BR: No, I didn't think so. Because, as I say, Filipinos are very—how do you say? They're very ("clannish") to wherever they come from. Like if you come from Ilocos Norte, you naturally form a group. And they have been doing this all along. They love their queens. They love to sing and dance. They do it by themselves, though. But because, I would say, we were strengthened by the state foundation's program, everybody has learned to bind together to be able to get funds to make their interests in whatever they were interested in—dance, music, drama—grow. And that's what I helped them do—teaching them how to apply for grants, reviewing with them how to use the correct words, not just say that you just (want to) do this. I taught them how to apply for grants so that they could use it for support in areas of a director or for costuming. SFCA gave them money for that type of thing, costuming and direction. So it was a very exciting thing to look forward to.
- JR: Is [Prose Courtemanche] a friend of yours?
- BR: Yes, because her sister and I became very close. And Prose is married to a Caucasian person, Guil Courtemanche, who was then some executive with Hawaiian Electric [Company]. So when she asked me to help, I was really flattered, because it was something, as I said, my parents instilled into us, the love of being a Filipino. I thought (this) was my chance.
- JR: Do you think she asked you because she recognized that in you, that love of being a Filipino?
- BR: I think so. I think so, because. . . . I don't know if you know Filipinos, but there is a difference between the Filipinos that come from the Philippines and those that were born and raised here. The difference is, in the Philippines you come from a family, there's a lot of love and attention given by the mother and father. The kids get it a lot. It's a priority. You come into the house, you kiss one another, "Hello. Good afternoon. Mother, I'm going." And here, kids don't do that. Our youngsters do not do that. It's because everybody's busy, I guess. But in our family we have to do that. We ate as a family on a round table. Everybody ate at the same time. There was no such thing as the television interrupting meals. And that's the way it is in the Philippines. And so I guess after we became friends, she noticed that, I guess, I had the same type of background as she did. Now, why Mr. Preis chose Courtemanche, I'm not sure.
- JR: Did you have a lot of contact with different Filipino organizations before you came on to the SFCA?
- BR: Yes, yes. I must say yes, because of the fact that my father, as I said, was in the—what they called the Territorial Filipino Council [of Hawai'i], which covered the whole islands. And that's why I said it's interesting that I should end up (carrying out what my parents did when I was a little girl). What he started, I'm still in, you know. And because of my father's friendship with all these different people on the islands, it was very easy for me to call, "Hey, Nana so and so, can I come and see you cause I have something I think I can offer to you?" And that was, I think, one of the easiest things to do because of (my) contacts (and the) resource

people (who knew my parents).

JR: What year did you start working for the SFCA?

BR: I started in SFCA about, oh, let's see—was it 1972? That was when I was the part-time coordinator for the Philippine development program.

JR: Was that a paid position?

BR: That one was paid. I used to work part-time, so I got about—I forget—a very low salary, but I loved it so. And I did get to travel. They paid for the travelling part. I liked that.

JR: Did you have any staff, any people working with you or for you?

BR: Mr. Preis had regular staff. We had a secretary, we had the person who was in charge of accounts, and we had some arts people, like Ron [Yamakawa], who took care of the mounting (of artworks) and all that. I forget (who the others were. It was a) very small staff.

JR: But in terms of the Filipino . . .

BR: No, I worked alone.

JR: You were alone.

BR: And I was in constant consultation with Mr. Preis. Because whenever he would think of something that we could be doing, (we would discuss what was to be done). SFCA was the sole (instigator for all programs) and paid for gathering people and (presenting) a show or a dance program. At that time no groups had money, so they [i.e., SFCA] were (so important. Mr Preis) would suggest, "We should do this." We'd have a workshop for this. And they would pay the teachers and gather them so that they could have weekly classes. And I (believe) that's the reason that on each island now, you will find that there are groups that are still existing up (to the present).

On Kaua'i there was a Mrs. Guadalupe Bulatao. She (is) really a beautiful—how do you say—couturier. And she was known for all of her clothing on that island. But her son [Jose Bulatao] formed the Philippine dance group called Bailes de Jose. Then on Maui there is Agrifina Cabebe, who I think is still (active with the Filipino programs). She was not appointed [to the SFCA board], but she works a lot with Pundy [i.e., Masaru Yokouchi]. She (also) started a (dance) group, and she's still at it. And from her group, another group (blossomed, with one of Cabebe's teachers as director).

In Hilo, I don't know about (the programs) anymore. We had one (dance group) that was started, but I'm not too close with people in Hilo anymore. Now, on Lāna'i there was (also another group). A secretary who used to be with the school (was

the spark plug). From our workshops (in Honolulu), she went home and (developed interest) and brought our (master) teachers (there) to teach them on Lānaʻi. Whether or not (they are still active), I am not sure.

(On) Oʻahu we have a lot of master teachers, (such as) [Priscilla] Valentine. She was the (director of the) Pearl of the Orient [Dance Company]. Then we have Wayne Mendoza, who was an offshoot from her (company). He (was her chief) choreographer. Then we have Hana Trinidad, the wife of [*Honolulu Star-Bulletin* cartoonist] Corky. She (formed) her own dance group, (Pamana Dancers).

During my time, I would say one of my (happiest) accomplishments was the forming of a chorale (and) *rondalla* group [i.e., Pamana Rondalla]. We brought from the Philippines, with the help of our SFCA, programs for the betterment of Filipinos, the enrichment of our group, [including] two professionals (from the Philippines) who came under our wing, and they (traveled) to the different islands to help (develop two) groups.

JR: What were your early impressions of Alfred Preis?

BR: I thought he was a fabulous person, and I still do. He is a man that's worth a lot. He's, I'd say, our treasure. And he's really the father of SFCA. And this is why I say, when I read—or even before (he) left, you know, when I [used to] hear people say, "But we can't do this because (they're) not (a) non-profit (organization)." How I wished he was still with us. He was so wise and knew how to solve problems so that all peoples could be a part of the program.)

That really upset me, because the SFCA, I think even up to now, (should) be the ones to shoulder (the burden) and say, "Hey, why don't we do this?" (and suggest to them how we could do it). "And we'll put it in our program even though you're [not] non-profit. If you're going to further the arts, why not come under our wing?" I don't know if they're still doing it. But that was when I was getting [ready] to leave in '81. I remember they were starting to be very rigid about groups that had to be non-profit, otherwise you could not receive (any) funds. That's the part that upset me, because we could do our own programming (through) SFCA.

JR: When you were working as the Filipino coordinator did your ideas and Alfred Preis' ideas pretty much fall into line?

BR: I would say yes. It was through his advice on how we could do things that we grew. He's a wealth of information. He just knew what he was doing (and how to solve problems).

JR: I'm curious [to know] what it was like when you were trying to support some activities in the Filipino community. I'm talking about when you were the Filipino coordinator. Did you feel constraints on your budget or on, you know, the time to do some of these things?

BR: Because we didn't have as much money then, yes. But otherwise, no. Whatever he

would say we could do, or, "Let's plan to do this," we did it, even though there was not very much money. What we did, through his wisdom---what (SFCA) did was they allotted to each ethnic group so much monies. And we would give X number of dollars to here and there. And we were able to grow. Before I left, (a budget of) \$13,000 (grew to) over \$40,000 for the Filipinos. That was a lot of growth. Now, what has happened after I left, I really can't tell you. But I do know we do not have as much monies to spend (now). I feel it has been spent on those that are---on groups that have people who know how to come out and fight for it. And the other ethnic groups do not have this. In one way I'm happy to see [that] Wendell [Silva is executive director of the SFCA] now, because it was through his council, also---the Kalihi-Palama [Culture and Arts Society]---that all those (other) ethnic groups grew. He was able to do a lot of programs for them. And they're still continuing to do it, because I read (about their programs constantly) in the papers.

JR: We've talked a lot about Filipino arts and cultural activities. Prior to coming to the SFCA, and when you were working as the Filipino coordinator, did you go to museums and art shows and the symphony or things like that?

BR: Yes, I did. I used to go, not as often as I had wanted to, because I wasn't paid very much either. But we used to go to the concerts in Waikiki---they used to have concerts every Sunday there---but not to the concert halls. At that time there were no concert halls. You would go to school auditoriums, but that was it. Like I said, during (the forties the concerts were presented by the orchestras and bands) in schools.

JR: How did you feel about the arts education you got when you were a student in high school?

BR: We did not have any, (except for the art teacher offering classes on how to paint for waste baskets or for the walls). And so that's why I said, my mother was a teacher of Filipino dance, and we used to use my brothers. The other prominent families on the island, all the daughters would join. There was another young woman at that time, Estrella Yadao. Her father [Emilio Yadao] was a minister, but then he became one of ILWU's [International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union] most valued men. His daughter was born in the Philippines but raised here. And she was also one of the teachers. And we used all the brothers and sisters of each family on Kaua'i, all became part of the dancers. (Chuckles) But that's the way it was done, (you volunteer your families into the dance company).

JR: After doing the Filipino coordinator job for a year---two years---you were selected to be on the SFCA board. How did you find out about that? And was it a surprise?

BR: Well, I think---I'm trying to recall. I think Pundy and Mr. Preis told me that I was going to sit on the board. I [was] dumbfounded but really excited, because now I knew I could help my people a lot more---not only my people, but all the other minority groups. As I said, because I'm a minority, I always like to help the others also. And it was a very nice experience to be able to go out and show people there is a minority sitting on this board. Because (on) the original board, you know, there

was a [Hawaiian] school teacher, Mrs. [Alvina] Kaulili. Did we have—oh, Pundy was for the Japanese. And the others were people who were known for their artwork. Mrs. [Phyllis] Bowen was the interior (design) person. And so it really was an honor for a Filipino (to be chosen).

JR: Had you sat in on board meetings prior to becoming a board member?

BR: Only when I was asked about a program, otherwise no. I was too busy. They [i.e., members of the Filipino groups] constantly either called or I had to call them to remind them that this is what you fill out, this is what you do with forms. So it was a program that you had to constantly be on their tail, because they didn't know how to do it. You must (also) remember, a lot of these people that we contacted are working people also, who are not used to sitting down writing detailed reports. So I used to assist them to use the correct words, so that when it comes to the board for approval, they know that you knew what you were going to do and do it correctly.

JR: You saw yourself as an advocate . . .

BR: Yes, definitely.

JR: . . . for the minority groups.

BR: Definitely. I was an advocate, yes.

JR: And you mentioned some other—like Mrs. Kaulili.

BR: She was an advocate for the Hawaiian programs. If she felt they weren't (doing the program correctly, she would call them in for constructive criticism). When I first sat—or in fact, when I first started as a coordinator—we (instructed teachers that they) should perpetuate our arts with a lot of authenticity, not just something that you just dreamed up. It should be authentic. I (also) had to stress to the Filipinos (that) it should be authentic programs. So (instructors were asked to teach traditional dances, art, or whatever that was) Filipino. And because my parents did teach us a lot of things at home, I knew what was right and what was wrong. I still do. So when I see things that are (being done incorrectly) now, I get very upset, because they're turning out to be show people rather than showing [what is] authentic.

JR: Was the rest of the board receptive to the kinds of initiatives you were advocating?

BR: Oh, yes, definitely. When I used to come up with (proposed) programs—of course, before I became a board member they would call me in to see whether or not (the program was done correctly). And then, because Mr. Preis was a strong advocate for things of authentic natures, there was no questions asked. But then after I became a board member they were very excited, because we were really doing and showing growth.

JR: I wanted to ask you about the audit that came out in '76 [i.e., Management Audit of the State Foundation on Culture and the Arts]. I don't know how much you recall about that, but it was in many ways very critical of the SFCA and the board in that the board simply went along with Mr. Preis' initiatives and thoughts. What's your perspective on that?

BR: Well, with me—I know what you're (trying to get me to say)—I'm trying to recall what it was. I was new in the business, and I always (believed) Mr. Preis was doing everything right. This is the way I really felt. Now, I'm just an ordinary (layperson, a housewife appointed to the board), and then what do I know what you're talking about in audits? But then, as I told the governor in my letter when I was getting ready to leave, we were able to follow what the management audit wanted, and that was to have more community input. So that's (why we developed the) panel reviews. And then the other (criticism) was that it seemed like monies were only going to certain people for commissions. Of course, being new on the board, you (believe the program was being awarded in the right manner).

And another thing that the (first) board never did was to evaluate our director. But then how could (they) do it when (SFCA) was (in the growing stage)? He was the first person? And until you could get (new) board members (selected, then they) would ask a lot of other questions. I don't know how anybody would have been able to evaluate (his methods). He was starting a new program. But after he retired, we were able, for the first time in sixteen years, to evaluate the (new) director, (who) was Sarah [Richards]. But prior to that, nobody did. I guess because it was a new program everybody thought it was being run well.

JR: What was a typical board meeting like when you were a board member and not chair?

BR: At the board meetings all the agenda was there. And then they showed you all the letters that were written in for requests for this program, for this painting, for this commissioning of a certain artwork. Now, remembering that Mr. Preis was the one who wrote all the—the description on what to look for when a commission was going to be worked on—who the architect was, how it was going to be done, things like that. (Being) fairly new, I just took the word of our director. And because he was an architect, he was (the) expert. So we just followed through (with his suggestions). When the criticism came through, then (we began) to wonder. "I guess maybe we should (have asked a lot more questions and) not just"—like they said, rubber-stamped (his recommendations). And then the choice of artists—(many times) I felt (it) was always too one-sided. And I felt other people should (have been) considered also.

JR: You mentioned the review panels. What do you recall about their formation?

BR: To me, the review panels were good because (the board) would ask other groups (for their input)—well, what we did was we did put notices in the paper (too). If you wanted to sit (on the) review panel, you could write and submit your names. Or we on the board would submit names of people from the Japanese [group], or

the artist group, the Filipino group, or the Samoans, to see whether or not it was going to be authentic programs. That was the expertise we were seeking at that time. And that's where I (believe the review panels were successful). When I first came on board I (asked a lot of questions). I used to write to Filipino groups when they weren't doing everything right. And I would tell them that, "You know, you have to (plan programs that are traditional). Because the monies came from the state, you should do what is (authentic)."

END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO

BR: What I was trying to explain to you is that when I first sat on the board, this stuck in my mind very (deeply). Culture is defined in our Chapter IX as including the arts, customs, traditions, and mores of all the various ethnic groups of Hawai'i. Okay, that's why I always try to keep mindful of the legislative mandate, that the goals of the program was to preserve and perpetuate the cultural heritage of all the different ethnic groups, to strengthen—and this is what I always (kept repeating)—the appreciation and pride in the origin of all the various ethnic groups. To me, (this) was really important. And if the programs did not do that—preserving and perpetuating by teaching, practicing, preserving, and perpetuating the arts—then I then become suspicious if somebody doesn't do something (correctly). Now, let's go back to what you asked me. I forget now. Yeah, that was it. And because the monies came from the legislature, I felt they had to do (programs) correctly. We weren't just spending money that would be wasted on something that wasn't authentic.

JR: In 1978 Pundy stepped down as chairman. Did you have any idea that you would be the next chairman?

BR: No, absolutely not. I remember coming to the meeting, and we all sat down. And then all of sudden, they (announced) the new chair was Bea Ranis. I looked at them, and I said, "Are you folks kidding me?" (Chuckles) I stood up and I walked around, I remember. "This just can't be true. What do I know? I'm just an ordinary housewife." (How was I going to function?) But I must tell you, it was a big responsibility. I felt (a heavy load) on my shoulder, because I was not as knowledgeable, I would say—maybe on par [with Pundy]. He knew a lot more people who knew so much about the arts. So I felt, golly Mr. Preis, I need you like I don't know. (The selection of the chair was made by the governor.)

JR: Were you expecting---did you have a feeling that maybe it would be one of the other members?

BR: Yes, I remember.

JR: Do you remember which one?

BR: Maybe Phyllis [Bowen], you know, people like Phyllis. Mrs. Kaulili, though she wasn't too well then. I didn't think it would be her. I'm trying to remember who else was on the board now. It's been so long I can't remember. Do you have names?

JR: Yeah.

BR: Oh, Bob.

JR: Gahran, yes.

BR: Because he was with the [Kaua'i] Museum, so I thought, ho, he's the next guy.

JR: You thought he might be . . .

BR: Yeah. So when I became chair, he was my number two. I made him my vice.

JR: I didn't know that there was such a thing as a vice . . .

BR: Well, I used to use him a lot anyway. So whenever we went anywhere, I always brought Bob, talked with him on the phone. I used to do a lot of telephone calls to Pundy, too, to find out if I was doing (things) wrong. And if I was doing something (questionable), Pundy called me. (Chuckles) I was accused one time of maybe meddling too much (with the director). But I felt because I was chair I think I had the prerogative of doing something if I felt (she wasn't) doing something right. And when Sarah was appointed [in 1980], I think she used to complain a lot and say maybe I was sticking my nose into (her area). But I would tell her, "No, I didn't think so. If I thought you weren't doing right, I'm gonna tell you."

I think of the fact that because I was a relatively new person, they needed somebody who would open their eyes. I was a fighter for the people. This is the way I looked at it anyway. But to be named as chair was really an honor. And when I went to see the governor, I told him, "Are you sure you (chose) the right person?"

JR: Why do you think they picked you?

BR: Maybe because I really didn't know too many things, and if they wanted changes they were (going to) choose (someone who would have an open mind and look at things in a different perspective) and would get to the bottom of things. And I think I did. Because I had to report to the DAGS [Department of Accounting and General Services] director, and we (would) sit and (discuss) and say, "But you shouldn't be doing this, you shouldn't be doing that." I could see their reasoning, and I could see the old-timers reasoning also. I was really very open to anybody's discussions. (Chuckles)

JR: Did you have any agenda when you were chairman? You mentioned earlier that as a board member you considered yourself an advocate for the minority groups. Did you see a similar position as board chairman?

BR: Yes. I was an advocate for those who did not join professional groups, and I still am. Because I felt that—I learned this in NASAA [National Assembly of State Arts Agencies], when I was with the national association—you have got to give others a chance to be able to get into the arts program. Because you're not a joiner does [not] mean that you don't have expertise to do things (correctly). But because you joined a big organization that could fight and you knew how to talk, that little guy there isn't (going to) be heard and never gets a chance. (It was at) NASAA where I learned (to involve others), because NASAA brought in all kinds of people (with expertise). They had movie stars, and they had minority advocates. I really learned a lot from them. That's why I say maybe going in (inexperienced), you (learn to) listen to more things than when you're an old-timer. And before I go any further, I'll say you must always bring, after a certain time, new blood. That helps the program improve. If you keep keeping your (old-timers, no new ideas are brought into the programs). Well, then you have staggered appointments anyway. But sometimes they forget—they forget what they were there for.

JR: NASAA---were those national meetings on the Mainland . . .

BR: National, yes.

JR: . . . that you attended as chairman or as a board member?

BR: As chair, (we all became) a member of the (NASAA) board—I mean, all chairs of (the art agencies belonged to NASAA). All the chairpersons were members of the national association. The first one was Pundy, and then, of course, (I was also asked to join them). Then when I left, Naomi [Morita]. I don't know about Franklin [Odo]. I think so.

JR: And did you attend these meetings on your own, or with the director, or . . .

BR: No, I brought the director, Mr. Preis. And another thing that I did—because, as I said, I wanted to share whatever needed to be shared, I felt—that when I first went (to Washington, D.C.), I even brought Evelyn Ng. She's our---what is she at the state foundation now? She's in charge of the (budgets). [Ng is the SFCA's planning and budget officer.] Well, I brought her along for the first time. I don't know if during Preis' time he brought (any staff). But during my time I felt, because they're working with people from Washington, they surely should (meet) people on that side, too. So that was the first trip for her, when she came along with me. I didn't know (too much about the workings), about how the budgets are done, and I felt she needed to know the people who (gave directions) to us and tell her, "You (are) doing (things) wrong." (She was a real asset. She got to meet all the people in Washington, her counterparts.)

JR: How was that first meeting? Do you remember?

BR: Oh, she was (just as) excited (as I was), because she got to meet the people that she was writing letters to. And with me, I felt, wow, look at this little old lady. Again, I'm going to say that, because I (chuckles)—what am I doing here? (I kept

pinching myself.) But everybody, I guess, knew that I was new (at this, and) everybody was treated equally, not because they knew better than me. I listened a lot.

JR: By that time, Preis must have been an old hand at these national meetings . . .

BR: Oh, yes. I had no problem because he was with me.

JR: And he introduced you to them.

BR: Yes, yes. And I guess I was always the little lady there, because—you know, most of the Caucasian people are big people, (tall).

(Laughter)

BR: And I'm just a little one, just trailing, following after them.

(Laughter)

BR: What do I know about going to Kennedy Center? Those were the kind of things I (dreamed someday I'd do. It was the most thrilling experience.)

JR: Do these occur every year then?

BR: Yes. You go to NASAA—was it about two or three times a year? I used to go away (on trips) a lot. That's why (I was fortunate) my husband (was very understanding. I felt) so sorry for him, because (the trips were quite frequent. I had to prepare meals and freeze them.) He really was my staunch backer.

JR: What would people talk about at these meetings, just generally?

BR: Same thing as we do on our board meetings. Are we doing right? Are we giving enough funding to the correct people? What is your state doing? Are you really making wise choices? (The) kind of (business discussions) that we do now. And what's going on now, whether or not you could be funding (the right projects). [Senator William] Proxmire, you remember? He used to fight about giving monies—blowing up balloons, and these obscene—what some people would call obscene art. That was during our time also.

JR: How did Hawai'i compare to the other states, in your mind?

BR: I thought we were doing pretty good, very well. I forget the one that Proxmire picked on Hawai'i for. I really forgot what it was. It's been so long I forget. Every time I hear his name I think of that incident. And as I said, I had surgery recently, so everything seems to slip my mind. I don't know why. (Chuckles) But he picked on us, on one thing. I forgot. Kite flying?

JR: If I asked you to sum up for me your leadership style, how would you describe it?

BR: I think a little different from Pundy, anyway. Pundy really used a lot of Mr. Preis. But if I didn't like something, I would say I didn't like it. (And I listened to the other commissioners and to the general public who called me.)

JR: Was that hard, because one time he [i.e., Preis] was your boss?

BR: Oh, yes. I must tell you that when he retired [in 1980], I really felt very upset, because he was my mentor. And I really looked up and respected him very, very much. And it's just like saying to your father, you know, "I've got to let you go," or whatever. And as chair, you're responsible. And yet, what can you do? I feel very, very sad about that. But I see he's getting a lot more active again. I see his name a lot. They send me agendas for going to make [art] purchases, and I see his name on the list quite often.

JR: What were those last years like that Alfred Preis was director and you were chairman?

BR: Our board members were getting to do a little bit more fighting than they generally did—fighting meaning fighting ideas that he was doing. Or if he was sort of like pushing to get an artist chosen, there would be a lot of static. So that was the only difference. And then because the legislators would balk at the complaints that they get from the outside—meaning, I guess, other artists who were not chosen. The complaints went to the legislators, so this is why we had to say we're going to make changes. And we did. And this is why, I (repeat), you need new people (on board). When the time comes, don't reappoint (the same people). You should give new people a chance to sit on the board. It's a prestigious board. It's a very important board, important to the whole community, so that you get fair chances in whatever you do.

One that I really felt very badly about—I don't know if I should say it now—but Rocky Jensen was one example. I thought his artwork was fabulous. To me, he did things that were Hawaiian. And he knew—it was his style. But Mr. Preis never liked that. I don't know why. Bob [Gahrn] and I went to see him one time, and we said, "We'll make purchases." He [i.e., Preis] did not consider buying any of his things. And look at him [i.e., Jensen] today. He's got things in Washington D.C. Isn't that right? In Statuary Hall? My god, we used to give him a bad time, and I (could) never (understand) why. I liked his artwork, but then if you get outvoted what do you do?

JR: In later years there was—his name even came up in the papers. There was some controversy about—this was after you were on the board, I mean after you left the board—controversy about funding things like the symphony and groups like this instead of Hawaiian artists. Did you ever have to confront those kinds of dilemmas when you were on the board and chairman?

BR: Yes, I did. But like I said, in the old board that I sat on we used the expertise of people like Mrs. Kaulili, who was a strong advocate, supposedly, of Hawaiian art and culture. And if she felt it was a no-no, it was a no-no. Wayne Chang was with

me also. In fact, I thought Wayne would be the next chair. In fact, I had even suggested him over Naomi. But he was too busy. He was working for a doctorate. I thought he would have been a good person. Now, if he didn't like something, he used to voice it. Oh, he would say it. He would tell you, "No way"—what he felt about that. He was a very strong person, and I thought he should have been the chair. He said he couldn't do it. He was working too hard.

JR: Do you feel that the board supported you?

BR: I think so, I believe so. I never got static, except for one time when Pundy called me and told me that maybe I was stepping into the bounds of the director. I made a trip to the island of Maui [to see Pundy] for that. He thought he could talk to me. And I said, "No, I didn't feel that I was stepping into the bounds." I said, "As chair, you accept the mandate that you are overlooking a program that is mandated by the legislature." And I never changed. If I still felt that she was doing wrong, I let her know.

JR: Sounds like you were a strong-willed chairman.

BR: I (was), because I was, as I said, fighting for minority programs. I (repeat), again, from NASAA I learned that if you do not let others have a fair chance—hey, those are government monies. They should be shared by everyone, not just the organizations who knew how to (speak up). If you don't know how to (advocate for your program), you're not going to get a cent. And I say this again, too, and with strong conviction. Take (the) Filipino program. In fact, even before I left, on the day or month before I left, I warned my Filipino community, "If you don't go out there and voice your opinion, you are not going to get a cent." And look at it now. We only get maybe 5,000 [or] \$6,000 as compared to getting \$40,000 [in the past]. During Preis' time we were up to 13,000 (dollars). Now why so few? "And those are your tax monies."

I don't only say this to Filipinos, I (told this) to the Japanese and the Chinese and the Samoans, when(ever) they (ran) into me. They say, "Oh, Mrs. Ranis, we miss you. We're not getting anything." That's why I say Wendell [Silva] did a lot to support those programs. I'm glad he's sitting there [as current SFCA executive director]. I'm really happy.

You know, I had a good instructor, too—Pat Hartwell. She was very active. She came from Arizona—I forget now. She used to be director [of the Arts Council of Hawai'i], so she (advised and) helped me along when I got stuck with problems. She was an active person at that time, too.

JR: What would cause you to have a problem?

BR: Oh, if I thought I wasn't doing something right, I would just ask, "Am I doing right?" And because of her, too, I got to know a lot more people in NASAA. Because she (had a lot of) friends across the ocean. And then, too, we got criticized because it seemed that she was the one doing all the writing of the—what is that paper

now, Outreach? Art?

JR: *Artreach?*

BR: Yes. Okay, before that it was another name. I forget.

JR: They had a newsletter, *The . . .*

BR: Did the arts . . .

JR: . . . *Cultural Climate*.

BR: Yes.

JR: Yeah.

BR: They said that they were our favorites, she and her husband [Dickson Hartwell]. I had criticism about that. [According to a 1986 *Honolulu Star-Bulletin* article, there were charges of favoritism in the awarding of publication contracts to Hartwell.] But I felt (they had the expertise). Now they've gotten entirely new people.

JR: Yeah.

BR: She no longer is there.

JR: When it became known that Alfred Preis was leaving, there was a search then for a new executive director. What do you recall about that search? And what were you looking for in a new executive director at that time?

BR: We were looking for a person who would not be so strong willed as Alfred Preis. And that's the sort of person we were looking for. And one who we felt (we could discuss with and) would be able to control, not just say, "Okay, we like what you say, but listen to us." (We wanted a person who was flexible, firm, and not too strong willed.) We had a lot of applicants. I think final judgement went down to five people. Wendell Silva was one of 'em. David Farmer. I forget who the other was now. Oh, (the) fellow with the City and County [of Honolulu] now, a Japanese fellow (Karl Ichida). He used to run the arts council. [Ichida was executive director of the Arts Council of Hawai'i from 1981 to 1984]. Anyway, we finally got to choose Sarah. I wasn't so sure about the choice of Sarah, but I went along with the board. I was outvoted anyway. (Chuckles) I think she did okay. But I (heard) a lot of complaints after I was gone.

JR: Well, you two worked together for over a year, not too long.

BR: No, not too long. When was she chosen? I forget now.

JR: She came on board in '80.

- BR: Okay.
- JR: And you left in '81.
- BR: Yeah, not really that long.
- JR: Yeah. How was your working relationship, as compared to yours with Alfred Preis?
- BR: Well, she felt that I was stepping too much in her area. And that's when I got called by Pundy. But it was during her time too, we started the arts consortium, the Pacific. . . . What was---CPAC.
- JR: Yeah, Consortium for Pacific Arts and Cultures.
- BR: Yes. [CPAC was actually created in 1979.] I liked that. Then again, there were minorities down there, and we all had the same thoughts and ideas. Those people that came from Samoa, the Marianas, Guam---(they shared our same thoughts), that they weren't getting their share. So when we worked together, more monies came into the program so they could do more (programming). I don't know if it's still on. Do you know if it's still?
- JR: To my recollection, I think they're no longer with CPAC. They're with West Coast, Mainland organizations.
- BR: Oh, that's right. They're with WESTAF [Western States Art Federation] now.
- JR: Yeah.
- BR: But are those people [i.e., the agencies that were in CPAC] still---are they also in WESTAF?
- JR: I don't think so. I think it's western states.
- BR: Oh, we left CPAC.
- JR: I think so.
- BR: Do you know if the Pacific Islanders have an organization?
- JR: I don't know.
- BR: I don't know either. But that was a nice exchange, because---I tell you, I was able to share with them what we did here (in Hawai'i). Those people down (under) really need to know how to work their programs. They have their own pride. When they belonged to CPAC, that was really very noticeable. You could see that they went gung ho on programs (and) exchange. You find that a lot of our cultures are very similar. They have their art weavers (and) dancers. Basically even the weaving and the dancing, very similar to ours---(the) Filipino heritage (was) very,

very similar. So I thought that (the consortium was an excellent exchange).

The name of that Caucasian fellow that came from Washington (was Roy Helms, who) became the director of CPAC. He was very knowledgeable because he came from the NEA [National Endowment for the Arts]. (I wonder) what ever happened to him? (He was an excellent source of information, and we learned a lot.) I think when I was away I understood he left.

JR: Were there any noticeable changes under Sarah Richards' administration, in terms of the programs of the SFCA? Or was she more just, do you think, getting acquainted with . . .

BR: Getting acquainted. She more or less went along with the board. But I understand that monies were (allotted) more for the finer arts (programs) than they were for the ethnic groups. That's what I understand. I (believe) so, because I constantly got calls (from organizations), and I couldn't help in any way.

JR: Nineteen eighty was a big year for the SFCA. In addition to---I think you moved buildings at that time, and you had to find a new director, and you also had to absorb what was then the Hawai'i Foundation for [History and] the Humanities, which was dissolved by the state legislature. Do you recall anything about having to absorb the humanities into the culture and arts program? Now it's . . .

BR: Yes, it is part of the program. I don't recall too much, because I didn't think it was (going to) be difficult to begin with. It's only that we added a new person to (direct) it. We (also) got a lot of expertise from NEA along those lines. It was trying to explain to groups how the program was going to work along with the SFCA. But as I say now, I (can't) recall. There were two mandates, and I can't remember.

JR: Well, it was a busy year.

BR: It was. We had so many discussions on where (and when we'd be moving). But that building we're (located) in now is a beautiful building. I don't know if you knew, but we were only in a little, itty-bitty office.

JR: I've heard that.

BR: Oh my god, I think it was only about this space---my living room is bigger.

JR: And you had art stacked in different areas.

BR: Yes, down in the basement.

JR: Maybe I could ask you about some different SFCA programs and just get your response. Mentioning the art in the office, stacked in the office, the Art in State Buildings program was critiqued periodically by the legislature.

BR: That's right, that was one of the (audit problems).

JR: What did you think about that program, and its administration and its importance?

BR: (It was very) important because we were spending a lot of money (from monies allotted by the 1 percent mandate). But because we had no room to store them (all) and because of the way they were stacked, I (admit) that the audit was correct. And the fact that we didn't (have adequate) staff. We didn't have enough people so that we could bring it out to wherever people requested them. (We began to hold) shows in the state capitol—we used the governor's office, the lieutenant governor's office. We (also) shared them in the various legislative offices. That was a good program, because then (the legislators and the public) would see the different things that were bought. Otherwise, it was only those who went out on purchases who really saw them. And then again, you get to see only certain names of artworks that were purchased. (Art in Public Places is an excellent) program. Ron [Yamakawa] is doing an excellent job. And I'm surprised he's still there, so maybe he's really enjoying it. He was always good at it anyway. We should have more programs (to share with all of Hawai'i's) people.

I am also very fond of the program where the works of the young students in school was shown always at Ala Moana Center. I don't know if they do it at Pearlridge [Shopping Center] now, but I (believe) they should do it there, too. The (children) did fabulous works. A lot of the (youngsters) came from that area [i.e., Leeward O'ahu]. (I repeat), if you bring pride to your group and to the artists, from wherever they came, (the artists would improve a lot). Share it. Make the (youngsters) become more excited. Even though they may not become accomplished professional people, if they could paint, make things beautiful, that's part of living.

JR: Did you have any goals for arts in education when you were on the SFCA?

BR: (Yes), sharing the various types of living done by different cultures was exciting to me. Lots of (youngsters) in their formative years should (learn) what Hawai'i—what we're composed of, (and of) all the different (nationalities that are here. It) was exciting when we (visited) the schools—I used to go (along), too. As chair, I was very interested in seeing what was being done. The kids are excitable. And when they see what people do, they sit, they clap, they (mime), they follow. I (believe) children should (experience the exciting heritage of our people here). As I told you, I (recall), in our first discussion, one of my proudest accomplishments was introducing Philippine martial arts. I had these kids come up and say, "Eh lady, I happy I'm Filipino."

I (asked), "Why?"

He (replied), "Hey, not only Japanese have karate, Filipinos have too, yeah?" He would not (admit) he was Filipino. He was Japanese Filipino, but he would never admit to the Filipino part until he saw these martial arts (presentation). (Chuckles)

So when we first introduced the Filipino martial arts, *eskrima*, (the older folks

were very happy. It) was brought (here) by the old people, and not very many people would share (this knowledge). When we (began this) program, there were (only) two known people (who were masters of this art). Floro Villabrille (lived on) Kaua'i, and the (other master who shared his expertise on O'ahu) was Braulio Pedoy. They were so thrilled to (learn) that people wanted to (learn) what they (had to offer). When I had (Master Pedoy) introduced (in) the legislature, it was one of (the) happiest moments of his life. (His pride swelled, because *eskrima* was an art anyone would share. The state now has) several schools on *eskrima*. I (respect those) old gentlemen, because Philippine martial arts (was banned in the 1930s because they used knives and someone) was killed. It is an art (form of the old country and) is only shared with certain people. You are like a chosen few. (The student who was chosen had to) go into the forest and live with the (teacher. The two masters) are still living, and (I believe they are our first two treasures. One can feel the love and enthusiasm and excitement of their sharing when they discuss their schools.)

One other (area) that I enjoyed about (*eskrima*) is that we in SFCA taught them how to certify their teachers. I look on it as something that was really worthwhile. Because anybody joining a group can go and say, "I've got a school," but he may not be a certified teacher of the art. I feel that they should be certified (by a master to be authentic. Dance groups) certify (their) dance teachers to be (certain) that (their methods are) authentic. And that's what (SFCA has always stressed—authenticity).

The Hawaiians have certified teachers, Filipinos (also). Halla Huhm, the Korean—she was noted as our Korean expert. (And we also had a) Japanese and Chinese (master. The Chinese also had a community leader) who was able to gather Chinese folk dancers. And to me, because SFCA was always the one who was credited with getting these people, they knew they were getting authentic (instructions), not just run-of-the-mill (teachers). I look upon the Merrie Monarch [Festival] as something full of pride for the Hawaiians, because they do have the *kumu hulas*, (who) are really top notch. I hope one day soon that we can do it (for) Filipinos.

(Telephone rings. Taping stops.)

END OF SIDE TWO

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BR: As I was trying to explain, being certain that a program or the groups had authentic programs for the ethnic programs is again, I will say, being mindful of the fact that we wanted to be able to help the people strengthen their appreciation for their own art. And to bring pride to them, it had to be authentic. And that was one of my biggest goals, even up to (the present). If I see someone or a dance group that's doing something to me that is real chintzy, rather than showing

authenticity, I let them know about it. (The groups and organizations still ask for advice from me and generally will make necessary changes.) Now, the other thing that I was always (concerned with was) that we had to bring these various cultures out to the community. We wanted to stimulate the growth and guide and promote our culture throughout the Mainland, because lots of people do not (realize that we are composed of various racial groups). And we're all part of the world, and in order for us to get along in this world, we should understand each other's culture. (This), to me, is important. So this is why I say that I was always pressuring people to make (certain) that (programs were) "the McCoy," that (what) they're doing (was) not just for show.

The other thing you wanted to ask me now, what?

JR: I was gonna ask you, before we finished up with your SFCA involvement, about the legislature, because SFCA gets their funding through the legislature, and it's been sort of a love-hate relationship over the years.

BR: Well, during my time when I took over as chair, I always made it like a mandate. Every board member should (when possible) accompany me to those hearings. And I got a number—a good representation. Bob [Gahran] came from Kaua'i, the one from Maui [i.e., Margaret Cameron] came. And those that could come, came. I always had the support of the board sitting with me at hearings, because I wanted to show (the legislature that) we're interested in our programs, not just the chair. And I don't know if they're still doing it, but it was something I always asked my board members. "Please come to [the legislature with] us, otherwise they will not listen to us and think we're not interested in our programs." And (the legislature) should know that.

And I think it worked well. Because you know why? They would lobby their people [i.e., legislators] from their island and tell 'em that, "This is what we want. We don't (want to) be cut." So my relationship with the legislators was good, I thought. And if they don't like something, they came and told me, too. At the time we had Calvin Say as chair, and then we had Eloise Tungpalan. And Neil Abercrombie---you know, he's very vocal, and if he doesn't want something, he tells you. We got along real well (chuckles), because I told him what I didn't like either. They were great supporters of ours.

JR: And they understood what you were trying to do?

BR: During my time, yes. Now, I don't know what's happened after that. And I used to bring staff also. Because there were times---my function, to me, was making sure that I carry my mandates. But when it came to money-wise who was getting what, I needed my bookkeepers and my people to tell me. So Evelyn [Ng], as fiscal (officer). . . . And who's the other one? And Ron, as the person in charge of all the artworks, came along also.

I understand during Sarah's time---oh, and when we had board meetings, (our) whole staff sat in. Because when we needed questions (to be answered), it came

from these people. During my time, again I will say, they attended all meetings, because we needed them. I (had) a different type of (function). They have their duties. I can't answer all the questions. But during my time---during Sarah's, after I left, I understand she cut all the staff from attending. I don't think that was right. Because how does a board member know when they're not able to ask questions of those people? They were depending on the director. (One) person doesn't know everything that's been going (on). The people actually doing the work are the ones that are responsible.

That was my style. I felt I should share with the others so that when the time comes for you to be relieved, you would be able to get someone else who could sit in for you also. And they could learn. That is what I also share with (the) Filipino organizations. If I am selected as a chair or president of a group, I let others represent me as president, as the next person in line, so that they will get expertise in knowing how to run a problem or what to do in a problem.

JR: What would you consider the highlights of your SFCA career?

BR: Being able to bring together all the various ethnic groups. (By) a mere telephone call they would come and support me wholeheartedly. I had no problems. They came so willingly. I was always proud of that. I think maybe because I get along with people. I don't know. But I never (received any) static. And because they knew that monies—and all our workshops—were monies supported from the community, they did things willingly. They came to share. They knew they had to come out and let people enjoy their money's worth and show that the program was working and not have to ask for money to be paid. Now that was what we used to call "service-in-(kind)" to your community. In our workshops we always say, "You're getting monies from the state, from the legislature, so you're supposed to go out and do your share by sharing it with everybody. These are their monies, too." So to me, that was a very important thing.

What was the other you question you (asked) now?

JR: I was asking about the highlights.

BR: That was what my . . .

JR: Oh, okay.

BR: Okay. And the other thing was being able to buy—make purchases, you know, on artworks from people who are relatively unknown. I would stand my firm ground. If I say I wanted that (painting) and nobody agreed with me, I bought it, because I felt we never (supported) this person before. We shouldn't be only supplying monies to one person alone. That (was) my stand. (Chuckles) I wanted that known. So even on our panels, I did say—in fact, I thought it was a mandate—that if you fund a certain group, they should not be funded year after year after year. After a certain length of time, I always (believed) that you should give chances to the other groups (so they could grow too). But it was not getting to be like that. Once in a

while (SFCA) just fund the same people.

JR: Weren't the review panels supposed to correct that . . .

BR: Yes.

JR: . . . tendency?

BR: I don't know. Well, during my time it kinda did, because I would kind of speak out on that.

JR: What were your biggest frustrations?

BR: My biggest frustration was when they would keep trying to (promote) the same people. (Chuckles) And I see they still doing it. (Chuckles)

JR: Something that you took part in while you were in the SFCA was the UNESCO [United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization] conference in Yugoslavia [1980].

BR: That was (another challenge) in my lifetime. Again I will say, here's the little old housewife going all the way to Yugoslavia. And I'm saying, "Good grief! Do they have the right person?"

(Laughter)

BR: I was so scared and frightened to think of going to a communist country. But it was the most beautiful experience I ever had, because I met the minority groups (who accompanied us). There was a Black person—two Blacks. One was a famous historian. One was the secretary of education. She was Black. And I went along with a Puerto Rican lady—I can't think of her name—and the Indian representatives. So we were the minority faction in this group. And do you know, to go to UNESCO they investigate you so thoroughly, I tell you. (Chuckles)

JR: How did your being chosen come about?

BR: I really don't know. I came home one day, and my husband told me on the phone. I came home, he said, "Somebody called and said, 'What did you think of going to Yugoslavia?'"

I said, "What?"

(Laughter)

BR: He said, "You're going to Yugoslavia."

"What for?"

"For UNESCO."

"What's UNESCO?"

(Laughter)

BR: I said, "They sure they got the right person?"

I had to go to state department, I had to be approved by the FBI [Federal Bureau of Investigations]. All my neighbors were questioned—what kind of person (was) I? But anyway, I (was sent). We belonged to different select committees. I belonged to the culture and the arts committees, by virtue of being (chair of SFCA). You sit with people you didn't even know. But one thing I did for sure, I wore my mu'umu'us to every session so they knew I was from Hawai'i, the U.S.A. And I made so many friends because of that.

JR: Really?

BR: Even when I went to Washington [for] UNESCO, I mean NASAA, I would wear it to functions, my mu'umu'us, to show that I was proud to be from Hawai'i.

But I think in my final letter to the governor, when I thanked him for allowing me to go to be a member of the board, was when—I got to meet, then, the person who was the director general, Amadou-Mahtar M'bow. Do you remember him? He was the president of UNESCO. But the biggest experience for me—and I'll never forget this—I sat down so many times as head of state for the ambassador in the preliminary sessions. And you know—I'm going (to repeat) again—this little old lady sitting as head of state, (even as substitute). I thought, God. (Chuckles) And it was very interesting. I took a lot of notes. It's all in my storage.

JR: Was there something you were supposed to accomplish on behalf the United States?

BR: Well, the U.S.—I mean, you should never leave the floor. So if they were voting (on an issue)—of course, I got my instructions from the ambassador. Or if I wasn't sure, I'd write questions and give it to her. Then she would do it at the next session. But even if it was just sitting in as a part-time—or whatever you (want to) refer to that—it was a real big honor for me. That was what I liked (and enjoyed). And then, of course, wearing (my) mu'umu'u. As I said, people from all over the world, people like I'm seeing now, Qatar. Where's the fighting now? The Arab world. I even got to meet [Yasir] Arafat. I got to meet the astronauts of Russia. The prime minister of China, at that time, come up and (sang) Hawaiian songs to me because they love Hawai'i. So it was a fabulous (experience), sitting with world-famous and U.S.-famous scientists, because they all went to this UNESCO.

JR: What would people say about Hawai'i that hadn't, maybe, been here, people from different parts of the world?

BR: They still think of (Hawai'i) as paradise of the world. They never had anything derogatory, because—as I said, because of our different cultures. They think we all live real well, you know, no grumblings. They don't know. They don't know. They don't know.

(Laughter)

BR: And the other interesting part was, every time (our group) wanted something done for our (members), if our Caucasian counterpart would ask for something, they wouldn't get it. But if little old Bea would ask, they would get it. (Laughs) I thought that was wonderful. I was chosen by—I can't think of the name of the Japanese fellow who was head of the [state] Democratic party [i.e., Minoru Hirabara]. And I guess he was asked by President [Jimmy] Carter to choose someone representative of our state. And I guess when they said some(one) who would represent minorities, they thought of state foundation. So I guess I was the chair, so maybe that was why I was chosen.

JR: You weren't necessarily involved in Democratic politics or anything like that?

BR: No, no. But, you know, sitting on the board is like playing politics, no? But I got along with the legislators also, so. . . .

JR: If I were to ask you in a paragraph or so to sum up the SFCA at the time of your departure and what you saw in the near future for the SFCA, what would you say to answer that?—

BR: Well, before I left I did write a note to my board members, and I want to share this with you. And I don't know if you're gonna write a review, but you will see that what I had suggested to them in here [reflects] how I felt about how our program was going. And I was trying to remind them again that we should have advocates for each group and that we should remember that there are a lot of grass roots people there who do not come out to our affairs because they thought it was a little highbrow, and they didn't especially care for it, and then, too, because the price was not right for them. Our grass roots people are ordinary people who cannot afford high twenty-five-dollar, thirty-dollar fees to go to a concert. But when you have festivals by the ethnic groups, you have thousands of people that will come out, hundreds of people.

And so the other thing that I was saying, again, is that we had to commit ourselves to training the youngsters in—what did I call it then—a fine arts school for our youngsters. And as I told you, I think they are doing it now, because I see Ron Bright [director of the Castle High School Theater Guild] bringing kids from all over—the Windward areas, anyway—to Castle [High School] to perform together. And to me, that was one of my concerns when I left. I was hoping Naomi [Morita] would do something about that. And I think that has come about.

The other (concern) is sometimes we, as board members, only share the views of one group. And we should be sharing it with everyone else, not just one selected

group who knew how to articulate and just give you big words so you get a grant.

And the (last concern) that I see also—I (learned) in NASAA—try to get involved in our programs not only our state monies, but involve corporate companies to pay for some of the activities of SFCA. And I noticed that when I came back [from living in the Philippines for one year] that Sarah was able to get some of the big companies to share in the expenses. I think you've seen that too, haven't you? And I thought that was something that was done after I left, because before that, we never did. And that I'm really proud of, really, really proud of (it). And then they have a lot of people now in the communities that are doing things (with) SFCA. So to me, that is something that I had asked for before I left. And that I'm really proud of.

Now, the other concern was that the quality of programs that we were doing, that we should not duplicate. At that time I felt, why were we belonging to some organizations in the U.S. Mainland when we could be doing it here and using our own monies here to do our programs? Now, what they did is that they abandoned CPAC and went to WESTAF. I don't know anything about how much well better off we did there. Because if we abandoned CPAC, those people needed our expertise also. And because they were CPAC members, they became part of NASAA. I don't know if it's still on. I have not kept up. I think that was about where I left it.

JR: I know that you're still involved in the Filipino arts community.

BR: Yes, for the last, I think, three years, after I returned. We've been retired nine years now. When I left to live in the Philippines for one year, I came back and I wasn't involved for about two years, two or three years. And then the last three years I became active again. Because, as I said, every time they run into me in the street, they'd ask me how to do this and how to do that. So I did, because my husband is (also retired).

I was always a member of the Philippine Cultural Foundation of Hawai'i. Now, that was started by Mrs. Soledad Alconcel. She was the wife of [Trinidad Alconcel], the former [Philippine] consul general [to Hawai'i] and then ambassador of the Philippines to—was it Australia? I forget, anyway. And her goal was, again, the arts. We were going to build a building, and bring all these various artists from the Philippines, and, again, continue to hold workshops, have art shows of Filipino artists. Then she passed on. But one of the other goals was that we would offer scholarships to our youngsters, because there is a very low number of students going on to further schooling. That we have kept on. And we're still at that. But now, with the price of buildings and land costs, I don't know how we'll ever be able to attain that goal, because of the fact that we have only about twenty, twenty-five members. We only meet once every quarter. But the scholarship (project is) still continuing.

The other (positive thought) I've introduced in the organizations, the Filipino groups, is if you're a board or director of a Filipino group, because it's a volunteer thing, to allow in the by-laws and policies that if they cannot come, they'll assign

proxies. The president may or may not vote for them, or whatever, do their wishes anyway, so then they won't have to fully come in all the time. Some cases there are meetings every month. And they've adopted that. We've allowed telephonic discussions—taking pros and cons, voting that way—just so people would give more of their time. Because every(one) is so busy making a living that you can't really come to meetings all the time. But we have proxies and allow discussions by telephone. I know there's a sunshine law in SFCA. We're not supposed to do that. But this is (a) group of Filipinos that (want to achieve) something. That's about all that (I've accomplished).

JR: How would you compare the Filipino community and their involvement in traditional Filipino activities now versus when you were growing up?

BR: I would say more. We've improved a lot. I would say that it is basically because of SFCA's involvement. We went through all the islands. We no longer have the State Council on Philippine Heritage, but it is referred to many, many times. And because of that we've gotten bolder and more—the programs have been enlarged. And I only wish that they would really go down to SFCA and seek funding. (Or vice versa—SFCA should approach them.)

There is a group known as Gumil of Hawai'i. This is a literary group that has been ongoing for as long as I was with the board already. But it's grown even stronger because they keep going back to the Philippines every six months. It's a national-like thing, program. They are fabulous writers, directors of plays, magazine writers. They're beautiful. And they do it on the radio. I listen to Filipino programs all the time. I speak a little. I understand three languages. I don't speak so fluently, but I know what they are talking about. I only wish I could get funding for them, because they do beautiful programs. And they go to Farrington High School auditorium, school auditoriums, to perform. They don't have backdrops, they don't have the necessary costuming, they don't have necessary assistance with directors. They can't pay for those that come from abroad to help improve their lot and share their expertise. This is my concern. Now, if they did it, it would be the biggest plus anybody could get. But we have those people here who could get those people—that kind of people, that kind of assistance—but they don't know how and they can't because they don't have (funds). You know, the Filipinos are so interested in getting monies home to their families to help take care of them on the other side. So that their [membership] fees [to] belong to these groups—really, so minimal.

But I'll tell you another thing. They've learned to do workshops. They do workshops all the time. September 2 they're going to have a big workshop on literary—again, (sponsored by) Gumil. They bring a writer from the Philippines. And because of the move of immigrants that have come, they use a lot of these—the expertise of these newcomers that have come who are writers, well-known writers in the Philippines. And of course, at the University [of Hawai'i], you have some of the professors there in the ethnic studies groups. They use some of those, but they use those that come from their own regional areas. And I tell you, if you could understand what they're doing, you would be just as happy because they're doing something to improve

themselves. They really, really learned from the workshops we started. I hope one day that I can assemble, like they do the Merrie Monarch [Festival], a program to show—or have a big show like they do in the various types of dancing. We've talked about it with the various master teachers, but we really haven't gotten down to the root of how we're going to do it yet, but we will. And I hope we can get funding from SFCA.

JR: Earlier you mentioned the division between Filipinos who were born in Hawai'i and Filipinos who were newly arrived. Even in the political arena today they talk about the Filipino community as a community that needs to reconcile its differences and come together. How does that work into some of these plans that you have for the Filipino community in the future?

BR: Hopefully, they can reconcile. It's really because, you know, there are people from the Manila area, there are people from the Visayans, and then the northern people. The northern people were all great supporters of the former president, [Ferdinand] Marcos. And now you still have it, but during his time I felt that they were—our programs were geared to all one unit, one unified group. And now that's been divided. But then the university, too—because some of their professional people were against the former president, there were divisions there. They used to come into our conferences—we have one convention every year—and really activate. So we call them activists. (Chuckles) And we still have a few left. But now it's sort of simmering down. Now that time has gone by—it's four and a half years since the late president passed on [i.e., left the Philippines]. But I hope one day we'll all get together. I think I see the light now.

JR: And that's necessary.

BR: Of course, definitely. But the strong group that I just spoke about, the Gumil group, are from the north. Now I see where the southern people, the Visayans, have also started another group. And they're coming along slowly. Hopefully, they'll get together. Hopefully, they'll get together.

(Pause)

We have, I think, [Ricardo] Trimillos on the [SFCA] board right now. If he could go out more and attend these meetings of these various groups, he's going to get them excited again. That's what I used to do as the coordinator at that time and as a board member. I went to every known meeting there was to tell them, "Do this so you can get a share, so that you can advance your program." And that's how we got them all excited. But now no (one) does that. They don't hear from him. They don't even know who he is. So I really wish that Wendell, maybe, would sit down with him one day and tell him go out and help (the Filipino groups). Gee, they need help. Because (Wendell is) a strong advocate for minorities. I think he is anyway. (Chuckles)

JR: Do you think each group then—the Hawaiians, the Okinawans, the Filipinos, the Samoans—they all need an advocate?

BR: (Yes.) I wish the governor would also choose people to sit on the board that belong to these groups. You get a person that's Japanese, not interested in another person. You get a Caucasian person who's only interested in the fine arts. You get another person who's only interested, say, in a Hawaiian group. You have two of them—you have a Hawaiian and you have a Filipino—but who do not go out and make themselves known. We're not gonna—(SFCA is) not going to function right. Maybe it's my thoughts, but that's why I was so happy to be on that (SFCA) board. The fact that I could help any minority was my goal.

JR: Well, it's been a pleasure talking to you.

BR: Oh, it was an enjoyable thing. I haven't done this in years.

(Laughter)

BR: And you know, I smile to myself every day—every month, when I get the agenda of the [SFCA board] meeting. I don't know if somebody's asking me to do something, but they send me an agenda—you know, when the meeting is going to be. (Laughs) I don't know who sends it, really, I don't. But they send me the date and the time. And as I said, because I'm retired now I kinda let it run through. I'm getting a little concerned because I feel that when I look at annual reports. . . . And then they have this Smithsonian [Institution] festival.

JR: Yeah.

BR: Washington? They're gonna repeat it here again. [Hawai'i was the featured state in the Smithsonian Institution's Twenty-third Annual Festival of American Folklife held in Washington, D.C. in 1989. Hawai'i's portion of the festival was restaged in Honolulu in 1990.] And they're gonna use people who are not certified Filipino participants. That gripes me, because they know that there are certified people. (Chuckles) It's upsetting because all the monies that we had provided to get these things done—what's happened to them? These groups all died. And that was one of the things I say in here [BR picks up a file containing old SFCA notes and letters]. In my last meeting I said, "You know, how (are) we going to protect. . . . The growth of the arts activity throughout the country was fueled by seed monies and guidance from the National Endowment [for the Arts]. In the three and a half years as chair, the questions really creep up to me, and that is, quote, what great, startling, innovative thing do we get involved with or help fund? Or, how are we going to protect, sustain, and hopefully keep from dying the organizations, activities, and programs we have already started?" A lot of the programs that we started no longer exist. What's happened to all the training that we gave all these people? That's my concern. And we still give monies. But if it doesn't grow and it just dies, what a wasteful thing to do.

And you were asking me now about the humanities program. At this time I also wrote, "The SFCA, as well as the federal and state, bear the responsibility for encouraging and protecting the arts and humanities. And I'm saying no person—no child, no senior citizen—should be denied, by reason of geography, inadequate

income, or education, or physical or mental handicaps, access to our programs." So if our board members do not go out and make themselves known, [not] only by the newspapers—and lots of people don't read newspapers—how do they know if people know that these things exist? The histories and humanities group, every Sunday or every month—you see it in the paper—they offer program money for different humanities programs.

JR: Oh, that's the Hawaii Committee for the Humanities [HCH].

BR: Okay, that was started after we took over history and humanities. [HCH was actually formed in 1972.] I don't read about SFCA's humanities. Once in a while I hear by ear somebody's doing something. What's her name—Dorothy somebody—the name of the woman that's in charge now?

JR: Dolly?

BR: Dolly.

JR: Strazar.

BR: Strazar, yes. [Marie Dolly Strazar is the SFCA's humanities specialist.] I mean, right now (they) could be (doing) an interesting study (as to) why, or how come, we are polarized in our political thinking, you know. But because they don't understand what that group does. . . . (And) if you don't go out to meetings and say, "Let's hold a conference, just on this alone"—(they're going to) have an auditorium full of people. I'm not kidding, you know. (Chuckles) So this is my concern.

But thank you, Joe. This has been a pleasure. I haven't talked about SFCA in years. And I thoroughly enjoyed what I did. I wish I could go back again and start all over.

(Laughter)

JR: Your husband probably doesn't want you to wish that.

BR: No, but he can see where I really enjoy it. So that's why I guess he allows me to go back to my regular little meetings. We get into good arguments in this house, because he says, "How do you know all the money you folks spend is being used worthwhile?" (Chuckles) Which is true. He's the kind that will always give me an argument, you know.

Halla Huhm is still alive, so they'll still have a lot of dancers. The other thing I took pride in is we gave monies to our master teachers to go back to the Philippines to study more. And they did come back [to Hawai'i]. And one of the things they had to do was perform for the community, give workshops, with the hopes that out of their group, after so many years, one or two from their groups would start another group. And that's how you grow. But if you just (fund) Pamana

[Singers of Hawai'i] (year after year, how can other groups grow)? Now I notice there are several other groups that are (developing without aid). And it's with that in mind that I feel (un)happy. The (Pamana) singing group has not really (changed). They need to form (other groups), so that the monies that we (spent on them) were not wasted. Because the same group that we had funded during my time is still in existence. When I go to the programs I feel (upset) because nothing new has been done (by them). So (SFCA) should share the monies with other groups so that—as I (stated before), I am for new blood on boards and commissions so that you get new ideas.

Joe, again, I say thank you.

JR: Thank you.

END OF INTERVIEW

**The State Foundation
on Culture and the Arts**

An Oral History

**Center for Oral History
Social Science Research Institute
University of Hawai'i at Mānoa**

May 1991